

ANTIM ASSURED 100+

The Topper's Last Read. Every Morning.

PART II · ENVIRONMENT TO DIRECT HIT TRACKER

Wednesday, 12 August 2026

"The Topper's Last Read"

Morning Edition · 08:00 IST · TheIAS Akademia

INSIDE PART II

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Environment & Ecology

GS3

GS2

11-12 AUG

Conservation Physiology — Tourism Regulation

Debate published 11 August 2026; underlying study published earlier in 2026 · Source: CSIR-CCMB Hyderabad, in *Animal Conservation* (ZSL)

Do Tourists Stress Tigers? India's First Multi-Reserve Hormone Study — and the Critique It Drew

Why in News: On 11 August 2026, two independent publications carried the debate over India's first multi-reserve tiger conservation-physiology study by CSIR-Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology, Hyderabad — one reporting the findings and a management case for tourism limits, the other a conservation biologist's methodological critique. The card is dated to that 11 August debate, not to the study, which was published earlier in 2026.

Background: Conservation physiology measures stress non-invasively through glucocorticoid metabolites excreted in dung, avoiding capture and sedation. Under the allostasis framework, a transient rise in glucocorticoids is adaptive rather than pathological — it is what allows an animal to respond to a challenge. That distinction is the heart of the dispute. Tiger reserves in India are legally divided into a core zone, notified as a Critical Tiger Habitat with tourism tightly capped, and a buffer zone permitting regulated human use, under Section 38V of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- India's first multi-reserve tiger conservation-physiology study, covering five reserves: Corbett (Uttarakhand), Tadoba-Andhari (Maharashtra), Kanha and Bandhavgarh (Madhya Pradesh) and Periyar (Kerala).
- Sample base: 610 genetically confirmed scat samples — 291 female and 185 male — collected between 2020 and 2023 across four seasons over two years.
- Two biomarkers used: faecal glucocorticoid metabolites for stress, and faecal progesterone metabolites for female breeding activity.
- Counter-intuitive core finding: core-zone tigers showed sharper stress spikes than buffer-zone tigers, suggesting buffer animals are habituated to year-round human presence while core animals spike when seasonal tourism arrives. The effect was most pronounced at Tadoba and Bandhavgarh.
- Management recommendations submitted for NTCA and State forest departments: cap tourist vehicle numbers, prevent crowding at sightings, reduce safari duration by about an hour in both morning and evening sessions, and create additional water bodies away from tourism routes.
- The 11 August critique: glucocorticoids are not simple pathology markers under the allostasis framework; scats are collected along roads and trails, which is also where tourism concentrates, so detectability and disturbance are confounded in the sampling design; individuals were not genetically distinguished, so pseudoreplication cannot be excluded; several models explain only a modest share of variance.
- The lead researcher has stated explicitly that the team is "not arguing against wildlife tourism".

🎯 MAINS DIMENSIONS / ANALYSIS

- This is a rare case of a live scientific disagreement inside Indian conservation, which makes it far more valuable for Mains than a settled finding — it lets you write about how policy should treat contested evidence.

- The confounding problem is genuinely serious: if samples are collected where tourists go, then higher measured stress in tourist areas may partly reflect where scientists looked rather than where animals suffered.
- Yet the precautionary principle cuts the other way — waiting for methodologically perfect evidence before regulating tourism may mean acting only after damage is irreversible.
- The counter-intuitive core-versus-buffer result has a real policy implication: habituation means the animals most protected on paper may be most disturbed in practice, which inverts the standard zoning logic.
- Wildlife tourism funds conservation and builds local stakes in protection, so blunt restriction carries its own costs — the answer is likely to lie in regulating crowding and timing rather than in reducing visitor numbers alone.

💡 Let's Remember This Through a Trick

Remember "core spikes, buffer shrugs" — buffer-zone tigers live with people all year and are habituated; core-zone tigers meet tourists seasonally and show the sharper stress response.

🎯 Probable Prelims MCQ (Statement-Based)

Consider the following statements about tiger reserves in India:

1. A Critical Tiger Habitat is notified as the core zone of a tiger reserve.
2. Buffer zones permit regulated human use.
3. Tiger reserves are notified under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) All three

Answer: (a) 1 and 2 only. Tiger reserves are notified under the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972.

📄 PYQ LINKAGE

GS3 2017 & 2020: Project Tiger, NTCA's mandate and the regulation of wildlife tourism; GS4 on evidence-based policymaking.

GS3

GS2

CURRENT

Protected Areas — Eco-Sensitive Zones

Announced 8 August 2026; contested in reporting 10 August 2026 · Source: Government of Assam / NTCA status report

Kaziranga's Eco-Sensitive Zone: Assam Moves to Cut It From 10 km to 1 km

Why in News: Assam has announced it will propose to the Centre that Kaziranga's Eco-Sensitive Zone be formally notified at 1 km, down from the 10 km that currently applies by default because no park-specific ESZ has ever been notified. The stated purpose is to ease development restrictions around Bokakhat. The proposal has drawn immediate objection, and it opens up the wider fact that half of India's tiger reserves still have no notified ESZ at all.

Background: An Eco-Sensitive Zone is a regulated buffer around a protected area, created under Section 3 of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. It is not a blanket prohibition: activities are classified as prohibited, regulated or permitted. Large polluting industry and commercial mining are banned or tightly controlled; hotels, resorts, tree felling and road widening require clearance; existing and eco-friendly agriculture continues. Where no park-specific ESZ is notified, the Ministry's 2011 guidelines apply a 10-km default, which is the position Kaziranga is in.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- Assam will submit a proposal to notify Kaziranga's ESZ at 1 km, replacing the 10-km default; announced 8 August 2026 at Bokakhat.
- Legal baseline: the Supreme Court held in June 2022 that every national park and wildlife sanctuary must have a minimum 1-km ESZ, with activities governed by the Ministry's guidelines of 9 February 2011; where a larger buffer already exists or is proposed, the larger prevails. The Court subsequently modified aspects of that order in 2023, relaxing the blanket rule where ESZ proposals exist.
- National picture: of India's 58 tiger reserves, only 29 have notified ESZs. Manas, Indravati, Sahyadri, Kalakad-Mundanthurai and others have proposals pending.
- Related NTCA data: 1,040 villages lie inside notified Critical Tiger Habitats, of which 298 have been relocated and 742 remain; at household level, of 1,29,984 families, 32,198 have relocated and 97,786 remain.
- Kaziranga's status history: reserve forest under the British in 1905, national park in 1974, UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1985, tiger reserve in 2006.
- The park spans roughly 1,302 sq km across Golaghat, Nagaon, Sonitpur, Biswanath and Karbi Anglong districts, and holds the world's largest population of the greater one-horned rhinoceros — 2,613 individuals in the 2022 census, roughly two-thirds of the global population.
- Litigation history: the Supreme Court has banned mining of stone, sand and soil in the ESZ catchment, and barred new construction on private land within nine designated animal corridors. A Central Empowered Committee report of May 2025 directed full implementation of the 2019 mining ban after evidence of illegal mining sites in the Parkup Pahar range.

🧠 MAINS DIMENSIONS / ANALYSIS

- Kaziranga's ecology depends on animals moving south into the Karbi Anglong highlands during the annual Brahmaputra floods — which is precisely the corridor a reduced ESZ would expose to construction. The buffer is not decorative; it is the escape route.
- That only 29 of 58 tiger reserves have notified ESZs is the more consequential fact: the default 10-km rule is unpopular precisely because it was never tailored, so States prefer no notification or a minimal one.
- The honest counter-argument deserves stating — a uniform 10-km buffer around a park abutting towns imposes real costs on residents who had no say in the park's boundaries, and a science-based site-specific zone could be better than a blunt default.
- The relocation numbers reframe conservation as a rights question: 97,786 families still inside Critical Tiger Habitats means the Forest Rights Act and voluntary-relocation packages are as central to tiger conservation as anti-poaching is.
- The pattern to watch is institutional: ESZ decisions sit with the Centre on a State proposal, so an ESZ reduction is a test of whether central environmental scrutiny can constrain State development pressure.

💡 Let's Remember This Through a Trick

Remember "29 of 58, and 10 becomes 1" — half of India's tiger reserves have no notified ESZ, and Kaziranga now proposes to shrink its default tenfold.

🧠 Probable Prelims MCQ (Statement-Based)

Consider the following statements about Eco-Sensitive Zones:

1. They are notified under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.
2. All economic activity is prohibited within an ESZ.
3. Kaziranga National Park is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) All three

Answer: (c) 1 and 3 only. ESZ activities are classified as prohibited, regulated or permitted — not all prohibited.

PYQ LINKAGE

GS3 2019 & 2022: Eco-Sensitive Zones, protected-area management and the development-conservation balance; GS2 on Centre-State environmental federalism.

THEIAS AKADEMIA New standing rule from today: when Environment has no fresh news, we go to newly discovered species, invasive aliens, or a national park in the news — never to filler. Both of today's cards came off that ladder. theiasakademia.com

SECTION 02

Places in News

PLACES IN NEWS — 12 AUGUST 2026 | ANTIM ASSURED 100+



- ① New Delhi (SC, Parliament, JTC)
- ② Damascus (Assad verdict)
- ③ Bab el-Mandeb (MV Tihamah)
- ④ Port Louis (EEZ surveillance)
- ⑤ Kaziranga (ESZ reduction)
- ⑥ Tadoba-Andhari (tiger stress study)
- ⑦ Kollam slope (new catshark)

Seat of the Supreme Court, which delivered the missing-persons and creamy-layer developments, and of Parliament, where the FCRA Bill's JPC referral emerged. Also hosted the India-Namibia Joint Trade Committee.

Indo-Gangetic alluvial plain on the Yamuna's west bank.

② Damascus, Syria

Where the Fourth Criminal Court sentenced Bashar al-Assad to death in absentia for crimes against humanity.

On the Barada river at the eastern foot of the Anti-Lebanon mountains, on the edge of the Syrian Desert — one of the world's oldest continuously inhabited cities, sustained by the Ghouta oasis.

③ Bab el-Mandeb Strait

Site of the missile strike on MV Tihamah, and the southern gate of the Suez shipping route.

About 29 km at its narrowest, linking the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden; Perim (Mayyun) Island splits it into Alexander's Strait and the Dact-el-Mayun. Lies near the Afar triple junction where the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden and East African Rift meet.

④ Port Louis, Mauritius

Venue of India's maritime-security talks on Mauritius National Coast Guard capacity building and joint surveillance of a 2.3 million sq km exclusive economic zone.

Capital on the northwest coast of a volcanic island of the Mascarene group, southwest Indian Ocean, sheltered by the Moka range.

⑤ Kaziranga National Park, Assam

Subject of Assam's proposal to cut its Eco-Sensitive Zone from 10 km to 1 km; holds 2,613 greater one-horned rhinoceros as of the 2022 census.

On the southern Brahmaputra floodplain, bounded by the river to the north and the Karbi Anglong hills to the south — a mosaic of tall elephant grassland, oxbow wetlands (beels) and semi-evergreen forest, annually flooded and rejuvenated.

⑥ Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve, Maharashtra

One of five reserves in the tiger stress-physiology study, and where the core-versus-buffer stress differential was most pronounced.

On the Andhari river in the Satpura-Maikal landscape of the Deccan plateau; southern tropical dry deciduous forest dominated by teak.

⑦ Kollam slope, Kerala

Type locality of *Apristurus drona*, a deep-sea catshark newly described from India's southwest coast — found in trawler bycatch at 400-650 m.

Continental slope of the southeastern Arabian Sea, seaward of the Kerala coastal plain and the Ashtamudi backwater system; designated an Important Shark and Ray Area.

Ethics & Integrity Cases

Case 1 — Regulate Now or Wait for Better Data?

Concept: Precautionary Principle vs Evidentiary Rigour

An NTCA official receives a study recommending shorter safaris and vehicle caps, alongside a credible critique that the study's sampling design confounds tourist presence with sample detectability. Acting immediately imposes real costs on tourism-dependent local economies on contested evidence; waiting for a better-designed study risks years of avoidable disturbance. The precautionary principle favours acting under uncertainty where harm may be irreversible, but it cannot mean that any study justifies any restriction — the officer must decide how much evidence is enough.

Case 2 — The Buffer and the Hotel

Concept: Conflict of Interest and Public Interest vs Administrative Discretion

A State official is asked to prepare the technical justification for shrinking a protected area's Eco-Sensitive Zone, while aware that a commercial hospitality project stands to benefit from precisely that change. The reduction may well be defensible on site-specific ecological grounds. But where a decision confers concentrated private benefit, the official's duty extends beyond being right — it extends to ensuring the reasoning is transparent enough that the public can see it was not the beneficiary who wrote it.

Case 3 — Equality of What?

Concept: Formal Equality vs Substantive Equality

A civil servant drafting a note on reservation policy must weigh two defensible positions: that caste-based disadvantage is social and not economic, so an income filter misreads the injury; and that if benefits concentrate among the already-advanced within a group, the constitutional purpose is defeated in practice. Both claims are about equality, but one measures it by the ground of disadvantage and the other by the distribution of remedy. The officer's task is not to choose a side but to be honest about which conception of equality any recommendation rests on.

Case 4 — The File That Was Never Opened

Concept: Duty of Care vs Institutional Convenience

A Station House Officer has long treated adult disappearances as "missing person" entries rather than FIRs, on the settled reasoning that most adults return voluntarily and an FIR consumes scarce investigative capacity. That reasoning is statistically sound and morally inadequate: it means the small proportion of disappearances that are trafficking receive no response during the hours when response matters most. Efficiency arguments are legitimate in resource allocation, but they cannot be applied to a category of case whose whole character is that you cannot tell in advance which one it is.

Case 5 — Vesting the Whole for the Part

Concept: Regulatory Purpose vs Proportionality

An officer administering foreign-contribution rules must decide how to treat a hospital building funded partly from foreign donations and partly from domestic ones, where the organisation's registration has lapsed. The rule vests the whole asset and leaves the organisation to apply for the domestically-funded portion afterwards. The regulatory purpose — preventing evasion

through commingled funding — is legitimate. Whether taking the entire asset first and adjudicating later is proportionate to that purpose is a separate question, and the officer should not confuse having authority with the authority being right.

Case 6 — Four Crew, No Flag to Call

Concept: Duty to Rescue and the State's Obligation to Citizens Abroad

A naval task force commander operating near a contested strait receives a distress call from a foreign-flagged merchant vessel with a multinational crew, including nationals of States with no naval presence in the region. Rescue is a customary obligation of any mariner and a moral one for any commander. But entering the strike zone risks his own crew and could be read as intervention in an ongoing conflict. The duty to rescue is among the oldest ethical rules at sea, and it does not ask what flag the ship flies — which is precisely what makes the decision hard.

SECTION 04

Prelims MCQs (20)

Q1.

Consider the following statements:

1. The creamy layer principle for OBCs was laid down in *Indra Sawhney v. Union of India* (1992).
2. Articles 341 and 342 empower the President to notify the SC and ST lists.
3. Only Parliament may vary the SC/ST lists.

Which are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) All three

Answer: (d) All three.

Q2.

The seven-judge Constitution Bench that permitted sub-classification within SC/ST lists decided:

- (a) *E.V. Chinnaiah* (2005) (b) *Ashoka Kumar Thakur* (2008) (c) *State of Punjab v. Davinder Singh* (2024) (d) *M. Nagaraj* (2006)

Answer: (c).

Q3.

Consider the following statements:

1. Anti-Human Trafficking Units operate at district and State level.
2. Police is a subject in the State List.

Which are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only (c) Both (d) Neither

Answer: (c) Both.

Q4.

Consider the following statements about a Joint Parliamentary Committee:

1. It draws members from both Houses.
2. It is constituted for a specific subject and dissolves once it reports.
3. Its recommendations bind the Government.

Which are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) All three

Answer: (a). JPC recommendations are advisory.

Q5.

Under the FCRA Amendment Bill, 2026, proceeds from the sale of permanently vested assets are credited to the:

(a) Contingency Fund of India (b) Consolidated Fund of India (c) Public Account of India (d) National Investment Fund

Answer: (b).

Q6.

Consider the following statements about the International Criminal Court:

1. It was established by the Rome Statute.
2. Neither India nor Syria is a party to the Rome Statute.
3. The UN Security Council may refer a situation involving a non-party State.

Which are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) All three

Answer: (d) All three.

Q7.

KABIL (Khanij Bidesh India Limited) was created to:

(a) Regulate domestic mining leases (b) Acquire overseas mineral assets (c) Audit mineral royalties (d) Operate mineral exchanges

Answer: (b).

Q8.

Consider the following statements about the Bab el-Mandeb Strait:

1. It links the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden.
2. Perim (Mayyun) Island lies within it.
3. It directly connects the Mediterranean to the Arabian Sea.

Which are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) All three

Answer: (a) 1 and 2 only.

Q9.

Consider the following statements under UNCLOS:

1. The EEZ extends up to 200 nautical miles from the baseline.
2. Within the EEZ the coastal State enjoys full territorial sovereignty.
3. IONS is a forum of Indian Ocean littoral navies.

Which are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 1 and 3 only (c) 2 and 3 only (d) All three

Answer: (b) 1 and 3 only. The EEZ confers sovereign rights over resources, not sovereignty.

Q10.

Consider the following statements:

1. Upconversion nanoparticles absorb near-infrared light and emit at higher energy.
2. Photodynamic therapy generates reactive oxygen species via a photosensitiser.
3. Near-infrared light penetrates tissue less effectively than visible light.

Which are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) All three

Answer: (a) 1 and 2 only.

Q11.

Consider the following statements about ozone:

1. The stratospheric ozone layer lies at roughly 15-35 km.
2. Photochemical ozone production requires sunlight.
3. Ground-level ozone is a beneficial primary pollutant.

Which are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) All three

Answer: (a) 1 and 2 only. Ground-level ozone is a harmful secondary pollutant.

Q12.

The Kigali Amendment (2016) to the Montreal Protocol extended it to:

(a) Chlorofluorocarbons (b) Hydrofluorocarbons (c) Methyl bromide (d) Nitrous oxide

Answer: (b) Hydrofluorocarbons.

Q13.

Consider the following statements about the Indian monsoon:

1. IMD classifies rainfall of 90-95% of LPA as "below normal".
2. Monsoon low-pressure systems typically form over the Bay of Bengal and move west-northwest.
3. A positive Indian Ocean Dipole generally suppresses Indian monsoon rainfall.

Which are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) All three

Answer: (a). A positive IOD is generally supportive of monsoon rainfall.

Q14.

Consider the following statements about the EPCG scheme:

1. It permits duty-free import of capital goods against an export obligation.
2. Second-hand capital goods are permitted.
3. It is administered by the DGFT.

Which are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) All three

Answer: (c) 1 and 3 only.

Q15.

Consider the following statements about India's Consumer Price Index:

1. India's inflation target is framed on CPI (Combined).
2. In the rebased 2024=100 series, food and beverages carry the largest weight.

3. CPI and IIP are released on the same date each month.

Which are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) All three

Answer: (a) 1 and 2 only. IIP is released around the 28th.

Q16.

Consider the following statements about tiger reserves:

1. A Critical Tiger Habitat is the notified core zone.
2. Buffer zones permit regulated human use.
3. Tiger reserves are notified under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.

Which are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) All three

Answer: (a). They are notified under the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972.

Q17.

Consider the following statements about Eco-Sensitive Zones:

1. They are notified under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.
2. All economic activity within an ESZ is prohibited.
3. Kaziranga National Park is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Which are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) All three

Answer: (c) 1 and 3 only. Activities are prohibited, regulated or permitted.

Q18.

Kaziranga National Park holds the world's largest population of:

(a) Asiatic lion (b) Greater one-horned rhinoceros (c) Swamp deer (d) Hoolock gibbon

Answer: (b) — 2,613 individuals in the 2022 census, about two-thirds of the global population.

Q19.

Apristurus drona, newly described from India's southwest coast, is a:

(a) Deep-sea catshark (b) Freshwater eel (c) Coral species (d) Sea snake

Answer: (a) A deep-sea catshark, described from the Kollam slope at 400-650 m.

Q20.

Consider the following statements about *Senna spectabilis*:

1. It is native to South and Central America.
2. It was deliberately introduced into Indian forests for shade and firewood.
3. Target 6 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework addresses invasive alien species.

Which are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) All three

Answer: (d) All three.

SECTION 05

Mains Questions (9)

GS1 Explain why the Bab el-Mandeb, Hormuz and Malacca chokepoints each expose India to a different category of risk. (150 words)

GS1 "A below-normal monsoon season can still deliver extremely heavy rainfall events." Explain this apparent paradox and its implications for water management. (150 words)

GS2 Should the creamy layer principle be extended to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes? Examine the constitutional and empirical arguments on both sides. (250 words)

GS2 Discuss the significance of referring contested legislation to a Joint Parliamentary Committee, with reference to the FCRA Amendment Bill, 2026. (150 words)

GS2 Assess the effectiveness of judicial contempt jurisdiction as a tool for securing State compliance with Supreme Court directions. (150 words)

GS2 "Capacity building is more durable than basing." Evaluate India's maritime-security strategy in the western Indian Ocean in light of this proposition. (250 words)

GS3 Examine the ecological rationale for Eco-Sensitive Zones, and critically assess proposals to reduce them, using Kaziranga as a case study. (250 words)

GS3 Discuss how the expansion of deep-sea fisheries is simultaneously revealing and endangering India's undocumented marine biodiversity. (150 words)

GS4 "The precautionary principle cannot mean that any study justifies any restriction." Discuss how an administrator should act on contested scientific evidence, naming the ethical principles involved. (150 words)

SECTION 06

Answer Writing Value Addition

- The reservation trap in one line:** Articles 341 and 342 let the President notify the SC/ST lists, but only Parliament can vary them — which is why the Centre argues the Court is the wrong forum for a creamy layer.
- Checkpoint arithmetic:** Bab el-Mandeb is about 29 km at its narrowest, which is why cheap shore-launched missiles have proved more disruptive to global shipping than a decade of piracy.
- Protected-area statistic to cite:** Only 29 of India's 58 tiger reserves have notified Eco-Sensitive Zones — the default 10-km rule is resisted precisely because it was never site-tailored.
- Conservation-rights number:** 97,786 families still live inside notified Critical Tiger Habitats, against 32,198 relocated — tiger conservation is a Forest Rights Act question as much as an anti-poaching one.
- Inflation weight to remember:** Food and beverages carry 45.86% of the rebased 2024=100 CPI basket, which is why Indian headline inflation tracks the monsoon more closely than the repo rate.
- Methodological line worth borrowing:** The Bay of Bengal ozone anomaly persisted through the night, which is what ruled out photochemistry and pointed to stratospheric subsidence — evidence design, not assumption.
- New-species hook:** *Apristurus drona*, a deep-sea catshark, was found only because trawlers pushed from 200-400 m down to about 600 m chasing red-ring shrimp — the discovery is a fisheries-policy story.
- Invasive-species costing:** Biological invasions are estimated to have cost India US\$127-183 billion between 1960 and 2020, with invasive plants causing crop-yield losses of up to 40%.

SECTION 07

AKADEMIA Direct Hit Tracker

Topic	GS	Capsule	Probability
Creamy layer for SC/ST — Centre's affidavit	GS2	Articles 341/342; Indra Sawhney 1992; Davinder Singh 2024	★★★★★
SC missing-persons FIR mandate	GS2/GS3	Every person; golden hours; AHTUs in four weeks; contempt	★★★★
FCRA Amendment Bill — JPC referral	GS2	Designated Authority; cancelled/surrendered/ceased; 5yr→1yr	★★★★
Assad sentenced in absentia	GS2	Transitional justice; no Rome Statute, no SC referral	★★★★
India-Namibia Joint Trade Committee	GS2/GS3	US\$592.94mn trade; beneficiation; WayaMe UPI export	★★★★
MV Tihamah / Bab el-Mandeb strike	GS1/GS3	29 km strait; Perim Island; traffic down over 50%	★★★★★
India-Mauritius EEZ surveillance / MAHASAGAR	GS2/GS3	2.3mn sq km EEZ; IONS, MILAN, AIKEYME architecture	★★★★
Light-activated nanobots (INST Mohali + BARC)	GS3	UCNPs; phototaxis at 980 nm; PTT + PDT; folate targeting	★★★★

Bay of Bengal ozone anomaly (ARIES)	GS1/GS3	21-23 km; day and night, so transport not photochemistry	★★★★
Monsoon August 2026 outlook	GS1/GS3	Below normal, under 94% LPA; August LPA 254.9 mm; positive IOD	★★★★
DGFT EODC digitisation	GS3	Advance Authorisation for inputs, EPCG for capital goods	★★★
CPI July 2026 / 2024=100 rebasing	GS3	Food 45.86% weight; June 4.38%; WPI follows 14 Aug	★★★★★
Tiger tourism stress-physiology study	GS3	610 scats, 5 reserves; core spikes, buffer habituated	★★★★
Kaziranga ESZ 10 km → 1 km	GS3/GS2	29 of 58 reserves notified; 2,613 rhinos; Karbi Anglong corridor	★★★★★
Eco-Sensitive Zone framework	GS3	EPA 1986 s.3; prohibited/regulated/permited; 2011 guidelines	★★★★
<i>Apristurus drona</i> — new deep-sea catshark	GS3	Kollam slope, 400-650 m; ZSI; Deep Ocean Mission	★★★★
<i>Senna spectabilis</i> — invasive alien species	GS3	6,000 seeds/tree; Wayanad model; KMGBF Target 6	★★★★
Ethics: Precautionary Principle vs Evidentiary Rigour	GS4	Acting on contested science; allostasis and confounding	★★★★

VERIFIED · PART II

Proof of Precision

Every item dated. Every claim verified.

2

ENVIRONMENT CARDS

6

ETHICS CASES

20

MCQS GENERATED

9

MAINS QUESTIONS

7

PLACES MAPPED

3

POLITY CARDS (CAPPED)

Environment

Geography

Ethics (GS4)

Cross-GS Integration

✓ Polity deliberately capped at three cards; freed slots given to GS1, IR, Defence, S&T and Economy

✓ Environment built on the expanded ladder — fresh news plus a national park in the news, with a new species and an invasive alien carried through MCQs and Value Addition

✓ Where a figure was unpublished at press time, the card states so rather than printing an estimate

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UPSC CSE Prelims 2026 Results

In what critics called the most unpredictable Prelims paper in a decade —

48

QUESTIONS FROM
ANTIM ASSURED 100+

7

QUESTIONS FROM
A SINGLE DOCUMENT

6

QUESTIONS FROM
A SINGLE CLASS

Our students had seen 48 questions before the paper was opened.

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